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Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 8 May 2013 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you of ongoing violations by Israel, the occupying Power, of the Palestinian people's freedom of worship and the consequent fuelling of religious sensitivities and tensions. The latest provocation has been Israel's arrest and detention of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, who is the highest Muslim leader in Palestine and is in charge of Jerusalem's Islamic holy sites, including the Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) compound, which houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Today, 8 May, Israeli forces broke into the home of Sheikh Hussein in the Jabal al-Mukabbir neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem and took him to the "Russian compound" detention centre for interrogation. The occupying Power alleges that the Grand Mufti was taken in for questioning about an incident of unrest yesterday at Al-Haram Al-Sharif, when Israeli occupying forces prevented Palestinians from entering the compound to pray, yet at the same time allowed a group of Israeli settlers to enter the area. Such unrest has become more frequent as Jewish extremists, escorted by Israeli occupying forces, continue to aggressively enter this holy site and to provoke Muslim worshippers. Continuation of such provocations could severely inflame the situation with grave, untold consequences.

Indeed, the detention of the Grand Mufti, who was released after six hours of interrogation, led to protests by Palestinian civilians calling for his release, along with the demands for his release by the Palestinian leadership and Muslim and Christian religious leaders throughout the country. We recall that this grave incident comes on the heels of Israel's violation of the religious rights, both to access holy sites and to worship, of Palestinian Christians during Easter observances a few days ago, when Israeli forces physically assaulted and obstructed Palestinian Christians, including priests, from participating in ceremonies on Holy Saturday in Occupied East Jerusalem.

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The Palestinian people and their leadership condemn the detention of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in the strongest terms and demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease all such illegal actions, aggressions and provocations against Palestinian religious leaders and holy sites, and respect its obligations under international law in this regard. The international community, particularly the Security Council, whose duty it is to maintain international peace and security, must take a firm stand on this very critical matter and demand that Israel cease such actions and all other illegal policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and abide fully by its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. Only such respect will convey whether or not Israel is serious about peace or insistent on continuing with this illegitimate military occupation in all its gross manifestations.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 462 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 6 May 2013 (A/ES-10/589-S/2013/269) constitute a basic record of the crimes committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations